

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 IO-11 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05 AID-05 OMB-01 EB-07

COME-00 AGR-05 EA-07 DOTE-00 FMC-01 /117 W

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P R 151705Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7425

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T R A A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 0246

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SS SP MR AG UR EG SA

SUBJECT: SAHARA ROUNDUP

1. SUMMARY: SECURITY TIGHTENED THROUGHOUT COUNTRY AGAINST POSSIBLE ECONOMIC SABOTAGE FROM ABROAD, AS MILITARY INCIDENTS AND ABDUCTIONS IN SOUTHERN MOROCCO AND SAHARA CONTINUE. TENSION BETWEEN MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN OFFICIALS REPORTED IN DAKHLA, AS CITY UNDER FORM OF DUAL ADMINISTRATION. GOM CREATED NEW PROVINCE OF SMARA IN NORTHERN SAHARA AND APPOINTED NEW CAIDS TO POPULATION CENTERS IN NORTH. SEIZED SOVIET TRAWLER FINALLY LEFT AGADIR JAN. 10, WITH BOTH GOM AND SOVIETS CLEARLY SEEKING TO PLAY DOWN INCIDENT. ON DIPLOMATIC FRONT, CONFIDENTIAL

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SIGNIFICANCE OF A NUMBER OF HIGH-LEVEL MOROCCAN SAUDI VISITS

UNCLEAR. EGYPTIANS SAY THAT GOE NOT SEEKING TO MEDIATE BUT BECOMING SOMEWHAT MORE ACTIVE IN COUNSELING MODERATION IN MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN DISPUTE.

2. KIDNAPPINGS, AMBUSHES, AND RUMORS OF SABOTAGE RAISING TENSIONS. WE HAVE A NUMBER OF REPORTS THAT GOM SECURITY BOTH IN AND OUT OF SAHARA HAS BEEN INCREASED IN WAKE OF A NUMBER OF RECENT INCIDENTS. WESTERN DIRECTOR OF SUGAR FACTORY IN TADLA WARNED BY GOM THAT "JAPANESE AND PLO EXTREMISTS" MIGHT ATTEMPT ECONOMIC SABOTAGE. IN RECENT DAYS SEVERAL MOROCCAN SOLDIERS KILLED IN AMBUSH INSIDE MOROCCO NEAR SAHARA, AND BU CRAA CONVEYOR BELT REPORTEDLY DAMAGED IN JAN 13 ATTACK. AT LEAST TWO KIDNAPPINGS HAVE OCCURRED IN SOUTH. TWO FRENCH COOPERANTS, WHOM POLISARIO CAPTORS DESCRIBED AS "FRENCH SOLDIERS", STILL BEING HELD AFTER DEC. 24 SEIZURE, REPORTEDLY ON TARFAYA-EL AYOUN ROAD. RECENT MINING INCIDENTS REPORTED ON TAN-TAN/TARFAYA/EL AYOUN ROAD. MEANWHILE, GOM COUNTINUES FEVERISH EFFORTS TO LOCATE SIX OTHER MISSING FRENCH YOUTHS (INCLUDING 2 CHILDREN OF FRENCH POL COUNSELOR HERE-SEE RABAT 184). FRENCH EMBOFF VERY GUARDED IN JAN. 14 DISCUSSION OF MATTER, BUT TOLD EMBOFF THAT GOM HANDLING MATTER AT HIGHEST LEVELS AND FRUSTRATED FRENCH SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON, OR EVEN IF MISSING HAVE BEEN HEARD FROM. HE ALLUDED CRYPTICALLY TO POSSIBILITY THAT "NON-POLISARIO" ELEMENTS MIGHT BE INVOLVED. FONOFF OFFICIAL TOLD US JAN. 13 THAT POLISARIO HAD DENIED RESPONSIBILITY.

3. MOROCCO-MAURITANCA: CONTENTION IN DAKHLA. WESTERN JOURNALIST WHO HAD RETURNED JAN. 13 FROM TWO DAYS IN DAKHLA DETECTED CONSIDERABLE FRICTION BETWEEN MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN OCCUPIERS. HE ESTIMATED THAT 600 MOROCCANS HAD ENTERED CITY ON JAN. 8, A BATTALION REINFORCED WITH ARTILLERY AND ARMORED VEHICLES. MOROCCANS HAD ALSO BROUGHT FULL TEAMS TO RUN AIRPORT AND PORT. MAURITANIANS AND MOROCCANS HAD BEEN SUPPOSED TO RENDEZVOUS BEFOREHAND TO OCCUPY CITY JOINTLY, BUT WHEN MAURITANIANS FAILED TO APPEAR MOROCCANS WENT AHEAD ON THEIR OWN. MAURITANIANS SUBSEQUENTLY TURNED UP JAN. 12 BUT MOROCCAN MILITARY COMMANDER KEPT MAURITANIANS WAITING OUTSIDE THE CITY WHILE HE SOUGHT

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INSTRUCTIONS. MAURITANIAN GOVERNOR OULD CHEIKH ARRIVED JAN. 12 AND, AFTER DAY-LONG DISCUSSIONS, ORDERS RECEIVED THAT EVENING FROM RABAT TO ALLOW MAURITANIANS TO ENTER.

4. CURRENT SITUATION IN DAKHLA SEEMED TO INVOLVE A SORT OF COM-PROMISE WITH DUAL ADMINISTRATION FOR PRESENT, IN JOURNALIST'S ASSESSMENT. MOROCCANS WERE IN CONTROL OF STRATEGIC POINTS SUCH AS PORT AND AIRPORT. MOROCCAN MILITARY EXPRESSED

OPEN RESENTMENT AT POSSIBILITY THAT DAKHLA MIGHT BE TURNED
OVER TO MAURITANIANS AT SOME POINT.

5. JOURNALIST SAW NO SIGN THERE HAD BEEN ANY FIGHTING IN
DAKHLA, ALTHOUGH HE NOTICED TWO BURNED OUT BUILDINGS. MAIN
FIGHTING AREA HAD BEEN AT ARGUM, WHICH MAURITANIANS SHELLED
ON JAN. 10 KILLING APPROXIMATELY 20 PEOPLE. MOROCCANS
HAD ASSISTED IN TAKEOVER, AND NO REAL RESISTANCE HAD BEEN MET.

6. SAHARANS IN DAKHLA APPEARED TO PREFER MOROCCAN ADMINIS-
TRATION TO
MAURITANIAN, ALTHOUGH INDEPENDENCE WOULD PROBABLY
HAVE BEEN THEIR IDEAL DESIRE, IN JOURNALIST'S VIEW. WHEN
MAURITANIAN FORCES WERE OUTSIDE CITY, LOCAL NOTABLES
EXPRESSED THEIR PREFERENCE TO MOROCCANS TO REMAIN UNDER
MOROCCAN CONTROL. JOURNALIST ESTIMATED REMAINING POPULATION
AT ABOUT 1,000, ALTHOUGH SOME INHABITANTS HAD BEGUN TO RETURN.

7. FOLLOWING INTITIAL MAURITANIAN ENTRY BY LAND,
MORE MAURITANIAN TROOPS CAME BY MOROCCAN C-130'S FROM
NOUADHIBOU. TOTAL MAURITANIAN TROOP PRESENCE WAS EXPECTED
TO BE SLIGHTLY OVER 1,000, CLEARLY A MAJOR PORTION OF GIRM ARMY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RABAT 0246

8. CONCERNING POLISARIO, FORMER SPANISH GOVERNOR SALAZAR ESTIMATED THEIR NUMBERS AT 3,000 ARMED MEN, JOURNALIST RELATED. SALAZAR SAID THEY WERE POORLY ARMED, NOT BEING SUPPLIED VERY WELL FROM ALGERIA. GUERRILLAS WERE SHORT OF FOOD AND WATER, TO SAY NOTHING OF GUNS. HE SAW POLISARIO AS CAPABLE OF CREATING NUISANCE ONLY, UNLESS ALGERIA MADE DECISION TO STEP UP SUPPORT. ONLY RECENT SPANISH CASUALTIES HAD BEEN ONE KILLED AND SEVERAL INJURED AT BOU CRAA FROM EXPLOSION OF MINES. SALAZAR INDICATED DAKHLA HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN PLANNED TO GO TO MAURITANIA AND EXPRESSED HIS DISPLEASURE, INDICATING HIS BELIEF THAT MOROCCANS WERE BETTER ABLE TO MAINTAIN SECURITY THERE.

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9. COMMENT: IT SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT DUAL ADMINISTRATION WILL CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME, AS MOROCCANS UNDOUBTEDLY VIEW DAKHLA AS STRATEGIC POINT WHICH THEY WOULD NOT WISH TO SEE COME UNDER POLISARIO PRESSURE. EVACUATION OF DAKHLA BY MOROCCANS COULD ALSO CAUSE MORALE PROBLEMS, AS WELL AS EVOKING CRITICISM FROM POLITICAL OPPOSITION PARTIES. IT ALSO CONCEIVABLE THAT AMBIGUITY THUS FAR OVER FINAL DIVIDING LINE IN SAHARA MAY BE SEEN BY MOROCCANS AS ONE WAY OF KEEPING OPTIONS OPEN TO GAIN MAXIMUM BENEFITS. ON OTHER HAND, MAURITANIAN SUPPORT FOR MOROCCO SEEMS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL CONSOLIDATION IN SAHARA AND FACING UP TO ALGERIAN THREAT. THEREFORE, WE WOULD EXPECT GOM TO BE REASONABLY ACCOMMODATING VIS-A-VIS GIRM. END COMMENT.

10. GOM APPOINTS NEW OFFICIALS IN SAHARA. GOM INDICATED ITS INTENTION TO CREATE A SECOND PROVINCE IN SAHARA BY NAMING QAID OUASSOU GOVERNOR TO "PROVINCE OF SMARA." INCLUDED IN NOMINEE'S DOSSIER OF QUALIFICATIONS IS HIS PERHAPS APPROPRIATE PREVIOUS ASSIGNMENT AS COUNTRY'S FIRE CHIEF. KING ALSO NAMED NINE CAIDS TO NORTHERN SAHARAN CITIES. APPOINTMENTS INCLUDED ONE INEXPLICABLE NOMINATION TO CITY OF ZAG, WHICH IS ON MOROCCAN SIDE IN EXTREME SW CORNER OF MOROCCO, NEAR ALGERIAN BORDER.

11. KING RECEIVED JEMAA DELEGATION. JEMAA LEADER AND SPANISH CORTES MEMBER OULD BACHIR (RABAT 0151) RECEIVED

BY KING JAN. 14 TO "RENEW ALLEGIANCE" TO MOROCCAN THRONE. ACCOMPANYING EDITORIAL COMMENTS IN SEMI-OFFICIAL LE MATIN NOTED WITH SATISFACTION THAT THIS DIGNITARY, HAVING BEEN MISLED BY "FOREIGN PROPAGANDA" AND HIS NAME "USED" BY ALGERIANS IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO DISSOLVE JEMAA, WAS NOW BACK INFOLD.

12. RUMORS OF ALGERIAN, POLISARIO RIFT. LOCAL PRESS HAS WIDELY PLAYED SPANISH PRESS REPORT THAT RIFT BETWEEN ALGERIANS AND POLISARIO HAD RESULTED IN ARREST OF LEADING FRONT OFFICIAL, EL OUALI. COMMUNIST DAILY AL BAYANE JAN. 12 CITED "SURE" SOURCES WHO MAINTAINED THAT STORY TRUE.

13. SEIZED SOVIET SHIP FINALLY DEPARTS. SOVIET TRAWLER, SEIZED IN EARLY JAN. UNDER SUSPICION THAT IT ON COVERT CONFIDENTIAL

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SAHARA MISSION, FINALLY RELEASED JAN. 10. WE UNDERSTAND KING PERSONALLY ORDERED IT RELEASED UPON PAYMENT OF FINE AND CONFISCATION OF FISH ABOARD. GOM HAS CONTINUED TO KEEP MATTER VERY QUIET AND BOTH SIDES CLEARLY PLAYING DOWN INCIDENT.

14. DIPLOMACY. DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY, IF ANY, REMAINED OBSCURE, BUT POSSIBILITIES EXISTED. UNUSUAL NUMBER OF EXCHANGES OF VISITORS WITH SAUDIS TOOK PLACE, WITH KING'S BROTHER, MOULAY ABDALLAH, ON "PRIVATE" VISIT TO RIAD SINCE JAN. 9. ALSO, FONMIN LARAKI HOPPED OVER TO RIAD JAN. 14 FOLLOWING OAU MEETING. SAUDI MIN OF PETROLEUM ZAKI YAMANI ALSO HERE FOR MINERALS CONFERENCE, SAW KING JAN. 13.

15. EGYPTIAN EMBASSY PROVIDED US WITH TEXT OF EGYPTIAN FONMIN FAHMI'S JAN. 5 REMARKS ON SAHARA BEFORE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, IN WHICH FAHMI PLEDGED TO "UNDERTAKE ANY EFFORTS WHICH WOULD PUT AN END TO (SAHARA) STRUGGLE AND STOP ITS DANGEROUS SPREADING." EGYPTIAN DCM SAID THERE NO QUESTION OF EGYPTIAN MEDIATION BUT EGYPT BECOMING SOMEWHAT MORE ACTIVE IN COUNSELING MODERATION IN MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN DISPUTE.

16. AT OAU MEETING, FONMIN LARAKI ANSWERED ALGERIAN DELEGATE'S REMARKS ON SAHARA BY BLAMING ALGERIAN TROOPS AND ARMS CONCENTRATIONS ON BORDER AS RESPONSIBLE FOR TENSIONS IN REGION. ALSO MADE ALLUSION TO RECENT ALGIERS VISITS BY "GUERRILLA SPECIALISTS" GIAP, HAWATMEH, "AND OTHERS." NEUMAN
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